

## Preparing for Historic Districts Commission Hearings

The HDC is a volunteer board of Concord residents appointed by the Board of Selectmen to implement the Concord Historic Districts Act. (The HDC recommends that applicants read the Act, copies of which are available in the HDC office.) The HDC members' expertise may include architecture, design, law, and the experience of having lived in a historic home or a historic district.

The HDC is allowed to rule only on whether an exterior change is appropriate for a historic district. **The Act does not allow the HDC to consider factors such as privacy, safety, or convenience in its hearings and decisions; to do otherwise violates the HDC's authority as set forth in the Act.** Rather, the HDC must consider architectural significance, historical significance, general design, material, size, massing, shape in relation to its site, its surroundings, and to existing buildings and their arrangement, and how the changes affect landscaping. Decisions are made on a case-by-case basis, e.g. a structure that was approved by the 1973 or 1984 HDC may not be approved by today's HDC.

The HDC is directed by Section 9 of the Act to consider the following in hearings:

- ◇ The historical and literary value and significance of the site or building.
- ◇ The design, arrangement, texture, material and color of the features involved, and the relation of these factors to similar factors in the immediate surroundings.
- ◇ The size and shape of the building or structure in relation to the land on which the building is sited, the landscaping and plantings proposed, and neighboring sites or buildings in the district.
- ◇ The applicable zoning and other by-laws of the Town.

The applicant should consider the following in preparing for a hearing:

- ◇ How does the proposed design harmonize with other structures in the district?
- ◇ Does the proposed structure, fence, or sign reflect what was available and typically found in and around the areas of Concord's historic districts during the 18th and 19th century?
- ◇ For a historic building, are original materials and designs to be preserved?
- ◇ For additions, is the original building still the dominant design element and dominant mass of the structure as a whole?
- ◇ Will the proposed alterations make future restoration to a more appropriate style more difficult?
- ◇ How prominent is the structure in the streetscape or the historic district?